

## MINUTES

### FACULTY SENATE -FACULTY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES COMMITTEE

October 20, 2020, 11 a.m.

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Northern Illinois University

DeKalb, Illinois

*All Faculty Senate members will receive an Outlook invitation to this Teams meeting.  
Others wishing to join the meeting, please send your request to Pat Erickson at [pje@niu.edu](mailto:pje@niu.edu).*

**VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:** Carpenter, Chomentowski, Keddie, Maki, McGowan, Palese, Surjadi, Whedbee

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Thu

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

Faculty Senate-Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee Chair **P. Chomentowski** called the meeting to order at 11 a.m.

#### II. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

A quorum was verified.

#### III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

**K. Whedbee** moved to adopt the agenda, seconded by **B. McGowan**. Motion passed.

#### IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

#### V. NEW BUSINESS

##### A. Definition of Faculty

Faculty Senate and University Council membership charts

References to “faculty” – BOT Regulations, NIU Constitution, NIU Bylaws, Faculty Senate Bylaws

Defining “Faculty” in Academic Medicine: Responding to the Challenges of a Changing Environment

**P. Chomentowski** invited **K. Thu** to present information regarding the current definition of faculty in the Constitution and Bylaws.

Thu explained that the current definition of faculty as outlined in the NIU Constitution, Article 6.1.1 is inconsistent with the definition of faculty outlined in the NIU Board of Trustees (BOT) Regulations and inconsistent with the definition of faculty as outlined in the bylaws for Faculty Senate and University Council membership.

This lack of consistency can become problematic when the Article 6.1.1 faculty definition is used at the local level in academic departments to justify instructors having the same amount of authority over academic matters as tenure track faculty.

NIU Constitution, Article 6.1.1 states “The university faculty shall consist of all full-time staff members holding the ranks of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, or clinical faculty.”

The BOT Regulations has been amended to include part-time faculty, and Thu hopes that a proposal can be brought to amend NIU Constitution 6.1.1 to align with the BOT Regulations definition. Further, he hopes the committee can bring a proposal to amend the NIU Constitution and Bylaws to provide a consistent definition of faculty as tenure-track faculty.

As tenure-track faculty numbers decline with replacement by part-time faculty, contingent faculty, or part-time instructors, Thu feels there is even greater motivation to reinforce the notion at NIU that faculty are tenured/tenure-track faculty, along with the acknowledgement of other categories for instructor and clinical faculty.

Thu is asking the committee members to review the NIU Constitution and Bylaws and bring a proposal for amendments necessary to ensure consistency within the documents, and with the BOT Regulations, as well as clarification that faculty are tenured/tenure-track faculty.

**B. McGowan** supports the idea that tenured/tenure-track faculty are the core, but expressed concern that care be taken to not further disadvantage contingent faculty. Thu agrees that instructors should still have a voice in academic matters, including curricular matters, because they’re teaching. **K. Whedbee** shares McGowan’s concern and asked if Thu could provide feedback that he may have received from instructors on this idea. Thu reported that it differs by department. For example, the School of Nursing bylaws provide for instructors to have the same vote on all matters except for personnel decisions. That means that tenure-track faculty do not control the curriculum or academic policy. In the Department of World Languages and Cultures, instructors are given voice, but no vote, in curricular matters. **A. Keddie** noted that the current authority of instructors in the School of Nursing governance is relatively new.

Whedbee noted that in her Department of Communication, because they have a basic course, they have a lot instructors, who teach the basic course as well as other major components of the curriculum. As a result, instructors actually teach more than regular faculty, and know the curriculum more thoroughly than the tenure-track faculty. The distribution of faculty within the department is very different from the instructors. If the current definition is amended to eliminate instructors, it's a concern that a relatively small part of the Department of Communication would suddenly have all of the decision-making power. And they have nothing in their departmental bylaws that would protect the larger parts of the department where they have more students. It's this discrepancy that is a concern, beyond just the issue of keeping things fair for the instructors, but also maintain some motivation to hire more tenure-track faculty.

Thu suggested that one approach might be to propose the high-level faculty definition change, but add language to ensure that departments could have the flexibility to decide what tenure-track faculty vote on, what instructors vote on and what SPS vote on. Per Thu, the purpose of his request is not necessarily to require changes at the local departmental level, but he believes that the NIU Constitution and Bylaws needs to set a higher-level definition of faculty that is consistent throughout the documents.

McGowan suggested that Thu bring a draft proposal for the committee's consideration. There was consensus that Thu and Chomentowski will work together on a draft proposal and provide that to the committee members before the next meeting. Chomentowski has some samples from other institutions that might be helpful in drafting a proposal.

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion to adjourn was moved and seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.